

794 some to render them fertile; the *digoma* are almost all made of grasses,
 789 reeds, or leaves; the remarkable *vahwera* costumes are made of various
 778 special kinds of grass; and on one of the most important excursions made
 by the *vyali* girls, called *maigini* (at the locusts), they are made to collect
 the bark of various kinds of trees. The *vyali* as a fertility rite is most
 clearly seen in the sexual intercourse at the order of the Bird which used
 to be indulged in towards the end of the initiation on the approach of
 spring. The true meaning of the Bird is difficult to discover, though it
 is significant that it is associated with moonlight, comes from a pool,
 and declares on its departure that it will leave mists behind it. In one
 praise song of the Bird it appears to be referred to as *vaḍaja*, the ancestral
 spirits: 'I have heard you, Bird of ours and Rahufa of Mūhale. The
 father of giving has gone, O *vaḍaja*. There remain only things for which
 one must pay' (*Gi hu phulaphude noni yesu le vuRahufa a Mūhale rahufa
 khi ile, vaḍaja, hu sad: kha muthgo fela*). This Bird, *goma* of the old men,
 is related to the *gomana* cult, using the same method of whistling through
 an instrument.

881 The Lovedu appear to have borrowed *vyali* and *vuhwera* and the
 794 *gomana* drum cult from neighbours. Some elements, like *avigajani*,
 ● 771 have become firmly embedded in a number of institutions; others, like
vuhwera, are looked upon more as entertaining appurtenances without
 any very serious meaning beyond that of giving pleasure. But the sacred
 drum cult clashes to some extent with the rain cult of the queen and there
 is little doubt that to this fact one must partly attribute the failure to
 beat *gomana* drums in recent years.

769 What sort of person are you who do not live happily with your people?
 182 To-day all your children have gathered here. They have come to see you
 781 given corn. And to-morrow, when they depart, don't let there be a
 single one who remains troubled. Don't seize them, they are your chil-
 dren.' The difference between a spirit and the very old is not great, for
 [805] an aged person is sometimes even referred to as 'our god' (*mudimo wetsu*)
 and his displeasure during life may be 'seen in the dice' as the cause of
 illness or, after death, be avenged upon those who have angered him. An
 old wife of the queen, who had long been ailing, sent her a message saying,
 'Unless you give me ox liver, I'll never die, but keep on troubling people.'
 The queen, notoriously averse from slaughtering cattle for meat, neverthe-
 less complied with this request, because it came from so old a woman.

769 Living relatives, even if not old, but because of the social implications
 182 of their close relationship, may by conscious or even unconscious
 752 (repressed) displeasure in their hearts cause illness. When Ramatiti's
 768 daughter was about to set out for her new home, her mother, quite un-
 expectedly and without the previous knowledge of any one, took some
 water and squirted (*hu phasa*) it on the ground near the shrine, saying,
 'You people of ours, I myself, mother of the girl, *phasa* lest they say I
 remained with a dissatisfied heart.' By intimating that she had no griev-
 ance, she tried to safeguard herself from being, at some future date,
 found in the dice as the cause of her daughter's barrenness. Unconscious
 grievances are recognized as working like our so-called repressed com-
 plexes. If the dice assign an illness, say barrenness, to a person who has
 no conscious complaint, he must nevertheless *phasa*, but his prayer will
 be, 'Don't say when you [the ancestors] seize her womb that it is I'
 (meaning, do not attribute your being 'stirred up' to dissatisfaction in my
 heart); or he may say, 'If it is I, let the child be well' (meaning, as I am
 unaware that I am the cause and do not wish to be, let the child recover).
Hu phasa in these circumstances recognizes psychological principles that
 have been clearly formulated only in the twentieth century. If one has a
 grievance one prays, 'Why is it that you rise up on my account? If it is
 I, I say, let them give me such-and-such a thing [e.g. beer of reconcilia-
 tion] and you gods do not "be after" it' (cause further trouble about it).

781 As the gods have human attributes, 'worship' is not characterized by
 humility or formality. Even at the most important offerings you may find
 it difficult to catch the words of the officiator amid the talking and laughter
 of the onlookers. But you will probably hear him say, 'It is not water;
 truly it is beer', or 'It is not just *mabudu* (light beer); it is real beer',
 when he pours out flour and water and, you may see, as we once did, how
 he winks at his friends who smile at the deception. The asking of a
 favour from the gods with beer is patterned on everyday conceptions of
 reciprocity. You sometimes definitely state in your prayer, 'We give to
 you that you may give her [the patient] life.' Religion is cheerful; at the
 harvest offering the gods come to drink and be merry with you, and the
 idea of solemn communion with the gods for the uplifting of the soul,
 found in higher religions, is absent.

771 The relation of religion and morality is too large a subject for discussion
 here, for both concepts are different from ours. Their relation is not

immediate and usually not consciously phrased, yet in the total complex of the culture all things are interconnected, albeit in ways that are not easy to see clearly. The gods help good and bad men alike, they send illness whether one is careful or neglectful of the observances due to them, and the after-life is the same for all. But we should be careful not to deduce too much from this. The position of a sister and her privileges are sanctioned by the gods, as is also the respect due to old people. In general the gods are not upholders of custom, yet on one occasion in 1937 two *amafajani* cried all day in the bush at Maulwi because some women had broken the taboo against cutting wood there. The chief concern of the gods appears to be to look after their own interests. They complain when they dislike the manner of their burial, but they are undisturbed when twins are not buried in wet soil, even though this has a disastrous effect on the whole country. If they were disturbed about custom in general, instead of things directly affecting them, they would complain of many disturbing changes in these days of culture contact; instead, one only finds that possessing spirits dislike European things and that at offerings European utensils are generally not used.

Another outstanding characteristic is the almost entire absence of any speculative element. The Lovedu are not concerned with such things as the life hereafter and the mode of life of the gods; theirs is essentially a practical religion in which rites are of far greater importance than attitude of mind, action than belief. Its rites are directed to practical ends, such as recovery from illness and the procuring of rain. In vain does one inquire into the meaning or reason of a rite, for the reply always is, 'The bones tell us to do these things,' and the practical end is phrased as determined by the bones. There are considerable differences from one family to another in the conduct of religious rites and the nature of shrines and, since religion is primarily a family concern, few people know what their neighbours do. Not uncommonly one finds a practice said to be impossible by some people accepted as normal by their neighbours.

Lovedu religion is not distinct from magic. The very terminology of the two is identical: *thugula* is a shrine, dedicated animal, or a sacred object once in the possession of the ancestors, but it is also any charm of bone or herbs concocted by a doctor. *Diphaka* are used in shrines or offerings to make the ancestors forget, as well as to ward off witches from the village. *Hu vrelcla* means both to pray and to utter a spell. *Hu phasa* is used both to approach the gods and with medicines when sending back disease to a witch; one may also *phasa* on the charms in the village gate on the arrival of beer in order that more may come to the village. In a sacrifice for rain, the magical rites are of as great importance as the purely religious; and *hu phasa* in case of illness is thought to have a compelling force. It cannot fail; if it does, there must be some other cause, for an ancestor can never refuse to be placated by the *phasa* rite.

The merging of religion with magic and medicine is everywhere evident, but nowhere is it more prominent than in the cult of possession. This cult is not indigenous; it came with the Tloob and, since its first reception some thirty years ago, has gained considerable popularity.

- 771 The form in which it is found is different from that among Shangana-
 794 Tonga and lent itself to ready incorporation into Lovedu religion.
 177 Among Shangana-Tonga, the possessing spirit is regarded as a foreign
 spirit from some outside tribe; among the Lovedu it is an ancestor who
 may, like any ancestor, demand the usual shrine or dedicated animal.
 The cult is not accepted by all and the royal family deprecate it as foreign
 and as detracting from their prestige. Its noisiness and showiness, though
 incongruous with the traditional reserve and lack of display, makes a
 popular appeal in these more insecure days.

794 A spirit entering a person causes illness and the first object of the cult
 753 is directed at curing the illness, so that initiation is regarded as thera-
 peutic. Long-continued illness of a patient, which will yield to no curative
 treatment, will be diagnosed as due to an ancestral spirit 'pressing him
 down', because it wants to manifest itself in him. The symptoms are
 never very definite: *Mashishimali* was 'ill all over the body' and suffered
 from swollen legs which five different doctors had tried unsuccessfully
 to cure; *Mamolatlala* was weak and ailing after the birth of her first child.
 The symptoms are neither violent, like the running amuck which accom-
 panies *whithwas* among the Nguni, nor of a specifically nervous nature.
 [520] Epilepsy, which is common, bears no relation to possession, and any
 peculiar behaviour is more liable to be attributed to witchcraft than to the
 spirits. It is believed that a possessed person after death likes in turn to
 manifest itself in some descendant and there is a tendency for possession
 to run in families. In one family three sisters and their mother were all
 possessed. Sometimes, especially where others in the family are possessed,
 a person does not even get ill; he just becomes possessed when people
 are singing or dancing in the manner of the cult. Contact with certain
 localities or people associated with possession is often sufficient. Thus it
 is said that, should one be among the Sekhwasha in Portuguese East
 Africa, who become possessed in a manner different from the Lovedu,
 one risks becoming possessed by merely picking up something dropped
 by a member of that tribe or eating the fruit of the fig, *madonna* (*Diocpy-
 ros w. xiphiiformis*), or *munchcheke* (*Cassia peterniana*).

794 Once it is known that a person is being 'pressed down' by some spirit
 755 wishing to manifest itself, a *lalapo* doctor, himself possessed and skilled
 in dealing with the possessed, is called to cure the patient. This is done,
 not by exorcism, but by rites designed to enable the spirit to come and
 make known its wishes along legitimate channels, known in the cult.
 For the spirits that possess people are not evil spirits to be expelled; they
 are the ancestors whom one worships, and their desire occasionally to
 manifest themselves through some living relative is comparable to that
 impulse towards life that makes them desire shrines, dedicated animals,
 and the perpetuation of their names in their descendants. The method
 by which a spirit is enabled to 'come out' and disclose its identity and the
 possessed person to become the host (*lalala*) of the spirit without being
 ill consists largely of dancing; and on all subsequent occasions when the
 794 spirits manifest themselves they signify their desire to dance.

763 Dancing is the central feature of the cult. The spirits are thought to
 536 enjoy this dancing; when manifesting themselves at festivities of the

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RELIGION. In common with the other Bantu tribes of South Africa, 771 ● the people of the Lowveld have ancestor worship. The form which it takes here bears many resemblances to that found among the Venda and also to that of the Shangana-Tonga though it differs from both in a number of ways. Characteristic of the religion of Lowveld tribes are the predominance of the beer offering to the almost complete exclusion of the blood sacrifice, the use of shrines and dedicated goats or cattle, the powers attributed to old beads and other objects once in the possession of the ancestors, the prominent part played by women, the virtual equality of ancestors on the mother's and father's side and the cult of the *dišani* in which old men deceive women and the uninitiated by acting the part of ancestors supposed to be returning to the village after certain ceremonies.

The creator-god, to whom however no worship is directed, is 776 known as Khudzwane, use of the term *Madimo* in this sense being in the Lowveld probably a Christian innovation. Belief in a sky-god, such as that of the south-eastern tribes, is absent, while spirits such as the mountain and river spirits believed in by Venda, and Tikoloshe, Impundulu and other half-mythical creatures who play so important a role in the everyday life and beliefs of Pondo and Xhosa are quite unknown in the Lowveld. Instead, one finds the *dišani* or *dišani*, ancestral spirits who come after sunset after important religious ceremonies in the royal family, during the *lamana* drumming and sometimes, among Lovedu, at the installation of an important headman, and call in thin, wailing voices. Often they whistle out their own names or throw stones at the village, scolding people for having broken customs, till beer is brought to them and they are appeased. They are ancestors, yet they are only half-men with one leg and one arm instead of two;¹ they dwell in the sacred woods, and when they come no one is to leave the village, women and children shutting themselves up securely in their huts. The fact that the part is acted 777 by a few old, trusted men is not known to many.

The sacred place at which offerings are made is not the cattle kraal 778

¹ Among Venda, *dišani* are thought to be mountain spirits with one leg, one arm, &c., the sight of whom brings death to the traveller. They have no connexion with ancestor worship and are said to be mostly of Sotho origin. This is clearly a borrowing.

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by the institutions and by the reciprocal duties and responsibilities between individuals and groups inherent in the social structure.

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Effects of Culture Contact

This picture of the world view of the Lovedu presents living practices and conceptions, not a dead and reconstructed past. Christianity has, indeed, modified some aspects of the culture: Christians are prevented from performing their kinship obligations in the traditional manner; they have accepted European ideas of trade for profit and use institutions such as the work-party for the exploitation of their fellows; but witchcraft, which they are supposed to have rejected, is as a result of increased tensions even more rampant among Christians than pagans. Christians substitute God for the ancestors, but continue to believe that the queen makes rain, albeit by the will of God. They tend to discredit the powers of charms but not of *supaga*, while 'heat', *makhama*, and 'shadow' are still real forces, and the underlying conceptions of the causation of disease and misfortune still hold sway. Even these minor modifications have to be viewed in the light of the fact that Christians constitute only about 5 per cent. of the tribe and are relatively isolated.

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The influence of Western culture as a whole is more insidious. The knowledge acquired by young men working in the towns and returning to the tribe holds implications as regards the nature of the universe and the destiny and purpose of man which they cannot harmonize with the traditional world view. They tend to despise what the old men cannot or will not make intelligible to them, such as the significance of the *digwama* and the *amidjani* which appear to them to be shams. This attitude and the inadequate response to it lead to lack of respect for their elders and for traditional values and institutions. But the total effect is minimized by the reassertion of the old values as the young men grow older, begin to play a part and to have a stake in the culture. Moreover, they are sensitive to insinuations that their doubts are due to the white man's insidious influences and soon repress them as unworthy and disloyal.

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The younger generation tend to shirk unpleasant responsibilities. Thus Jim refused to take over the family office of keeper of the rain-medicine, fearing the risk of sterility which handling of this medicine entails. The absence of many adult men, who are away as migrant labourers, makes the organization of the great ceremonials difficult. Reconciliation and the restitutive sanction are no longer the great forces they used to be, since the closely knit system of reciprocities, everyone's dependence upon day-to-day mutualities and the imperativeness for social life of co-operation, no longer exert the irresistible pressure on the parties to carry out compromises reached in the courts. Aggrieved litigants, reluctant still to invoke European intervention, increasingly resort to magicians who have developed a whole new system of revenge magic to even up matters. The trend is to put their faith in magical retaliation rather than in the sanction of reciprocity.

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